

Federal Funding Opportunities for Bridge Barriers

Overview

Congress established a **new funding opportunity** in the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (enacted November 15, 2021) to help non-federal governmental agencies install safety barriers and nets on bridges. This federal funding opportunity **is available annually**, and AFSP encourages all individuals to urge states and localities to use funds from Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program to help save lives through the installation of safety barriers and nets on bridges.

This new funding opportunity was established by expanding allowable uses of funding received through the **STBG program**. This program is administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Background

According to the latest data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2021 we lost 48,183 Americans to suicide, making it the 11th leading cause of death in the United States overall. That same year, falling deaths (1,184) and drowning deaths (459) accounted for 3.4% of all suicide deaths (CDC, 2023).

One of the most effective methods of preventing suicide is to give suicidal individuals and those who care for them something they desperately need: time. This includes time for the suicidal risk to diminish, time for the intense suicidal impulse to pass, or time for someone to intervene with mental health support and resources.

Barrier installation is a proven method of increasing this crucial time for individuals at risk for suicide by jumping. Barriers can be fashioned to areas of significant height that may pose a risk for a suicide attempt, such as bridges. These barriers act as a delay and deterrent to an individual at risk, providing more time to get through the intense, often brief, moment of suicide crisis. Despite what some might assume, research shows that suicidal individuals who are temporarily denied access to lethal means related to a suicide attempt do not simply “find another way,” but in most cases go on to live.

How to Apply

STBG funding is made available to each state’s Department of Transportation (DOT). In turn, the state DOTs identify projects for funding through a planning process. The planning process varies from state to state. To help advance an eligible project, please reach out to your state’s DOT to learn more about their planning process, eligibility, and how to submit projects for consideration.

Visit <https://afsp.org/bridge-barriers/> to learn more about bridge barriers and how to request our more detailed issue brief. Please reach out to the Public Policy Office at the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention at Advocacy@afsp.org with any questions.